

**JAN 23, 2006 00223**

January 18, 2006

Mr. Lester Snow, Director  
Department of Water Resources  
P.O. Box 942836  
Sacramento, CA 94236-0001

Dear Director Snow:

**South Delta Improvements Program**

On behalf of the West Basin Municipal Water District (West Basin), I am writing today to express our organization's support for the Department of Water Resources' (DWR) South Delta Improvements Program (SDIP), a critical water supply, water quality and environmental project designed to meet California's diverse water needs. This October, DWR and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation released a draft Environmental Impact Report/Statement (EIR/S) for SDIP, kicking off an important public review and comment process.

West Basin is a public agency that has been dedicated to providing a safe and adequate supplemental supply of high-quality water to its member agencies, communities, businesses and residents since 1947. West Basin has worked diligently to drought-proof the region by providing alternative water supplies to meet the needs of municipal, commercial, and industrial users to help conserve the potable water supply.

As you know, California is facing a critical challenge: We need a safe, reliable and high-quality water supply to keep up with our rapidly rising population and fast-growing trillion-dollar economy. However, we have limited water supplies in our arid state, so it is imperative that the use of our existing water resources and infrastructure is significantly improved; otherwise, we put our communities, farms, environment and businesses at great risk. Two-thirds of California receives its water from the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Given its importance, new and innovative ways to manage the Delta's water delivery system should be considered, as well as the water itself. In essence, we need to make every drop count.

In 2000, the state and federal governments initiated the historic CalFed Bay-Delta Program to manage the Bay-Delta's water resources and eco-system. A unique collaboration of interests supported the plan including environmental organizations, water agencies, business interests, farmers, and state and federal water and fish agencies. SDIP is the next step forward in this long-term planning effort for the Bay-Delta.

SDIP is a responsible and balanced plan for efficient utilizing and integrating our existing water management infrastructure in the Delta. Collectively, it will improve our state's water supply reliability, water quality and the overall health of the Bay-Delta ecosystem. The program will construct seasonal tidal gates to protect fish, and improve water circulation and quality in the Delta, dredge select Delta channels to improve water deliveries for local farmers, and allow State Water Project deliveries to increase modestly -- only when needed and environmentally safe to do so.

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Currently, the state is constrained in its ability to use surplus water supplies. We have the infrastructure to move the water, but until SDIP is approved, the state's water managers cannot fully or responsibly use the existing system. SDIP calls for only a 3 - 5% increase in the average amount of water pumped from the Delta. More significantly, SDIP will provide the flexibility to shift the timing of water deliveries when surplus is available and when environmentally safe to do so. SDIP is an ideal option for California to advance -- it will not require building a new project or the construction of major new infrastructure. And, funding for the program has already been secured through passage of voter approved bonds in 2000 (Proposition 13).

Importantly, SDIP will help protect important Delta environmental resources; specifically, protecting fish species in the Delta channels. At the same time, by providing the state greater flexibility in how and when SDIP operates its system of pumps, fish are granted greater protections.

Given all these points, SDIP is supported by a statewide, broad coalition of water, agriculture, business, planning organizations, and local government officials including the Association of California Water Agencies, State Water Contractors, California Chamber of Commerce, California Business Properties Association, and the Western Growers Association.

Water is the lifeblood of California – critical to our families, farms, and businesses. It is our responsibility to use this precious resource wisely through all possible best management practices, including water conservation, recycling and storage, to ensure California's water future. It is imperative that we have a more flexible water delivery system so that we can continue to accommodate growth in our population and economy while relying on existing water supplies.

Again, West Basin strongly supports SDIP and encourages all key stakeholders to facilitate advancement of this critically needed project.

Sincerely,

**William A. Baker**

William A. Baker, President  
West Basin Municipal Water District

cc: *(by facsimile)*

Hon. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, (916) 445-4633

Mr. Ryan Brodderick, Director, California Department of Fish and Game, (916) 653-7387

Mr. Mike Chrisman, Secretary, California Resources Agency, (916) 653-8102

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Mr. Dan Skopec, Deputy Cabinet Secretary, Office of the Governor, (916) 324-6358

Mr. Terry Tamminen, Cabinet Secretary, Office of the Governor, (916) 324-6358